

UNESCO AND ITS PROGRAMME  
VIII

THE RIGHT  
TO EDUCATION

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## UNESCO AND ITS PROGRAMME

A series of information pamphlets each of which deals with a particular aspect of the programme and work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Titles in this series:

- I. *Unesco in 1950. Aims and Work of the Organization.* 21 pp.
- II. *The Basic Programme* adopted by the Fifth Session of the General Conference, Florence, 1950, 26 pp.
- III. *The Race Question,* 11 pp.
- IV. *Unesco and the Economic and Social Council,* 30 pp.
- V. *Technical Assistance for Economic Development. A Human Approach,* 32 pp.
- VI. *Better History Textbooks,* 29 pp.
- VII. *Geography Teaching for International Understanding,* 37 pp.
- VIII. *The Right to Education,* 56 pp.
- IX. *Access to Books,* 24 pp.

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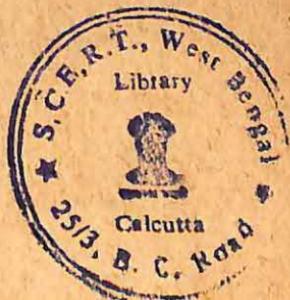
UNESCO AND ITS PROGRAMME  
VIII

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TO EDUCATION

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1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.  
*(Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.)*



U N E S C O

"More than half the people now alive have had no primary education of any sort and are therefore almost completely ignorant of even the simplest technical methods and processes and the most elementary ideas and values which, for the rest of the world, are the very fabric of daily life. However imposing our schemes for future justice may be, we cannot close our eyes to the tragic spectacle of injustice now before us. Those affected are not only the adult generations of today, but all those who, in the course of the next decades, will be able only partially to benefit from the progressive development of primary education. Even if mankind, by resolute national and international action based on the undertakings you are inserting in the Covenant, succeeds in winning the race between the growth of population and the advance of education, whose outcome at the moment is in grave jeopardy, it can only do so several generations hence. Many thousand millions of human beings would thus be sacrificed if no steps were taken to provide them, if not with primary education, with a minimum of general instruction, and the rudiments of ethics, technology and civics, enabling them to play a part, however small, in history. Apart from the fact that conscience must revolt against such an iniquity, mere prudence must warn us that such a tremendous host of backward people would endanger the whole advance of humanity and indeed the very spread of human rights.... As I have said in another context, humanity on its journey through history is like a convoy of ships brought together in time of war to face the dangers of the seas; its average speed must be determined by that of its slowest members. Or, to abandon the metaphor and state the point in clearer terms, you cannot have a wholly educated younger generation amid an adult society remaining sunk in ignorance."

(Extract from a speech delivered by Mr. Jaime Torres Bodet, Director-General of Unesco, to the Commission on Human Rights at its meeting at Geneva on 26 April 1951.)

S.C.E.R.T., West Bengal  
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## FOREWORD

Paradoxical though it may seem in an age of aviation, radio and nuclear physics, it is nevertheless a fact that more than half the world's population cannot read or write. The art of deciphering and reproducing characters is still reserved to a privileged minority. Although in some parts of the world the percentage of illiteracy is slight, in others the reverse is true: throughout vast areas, men and women are mostly incapable of reading the instructions they receive or of signing their name to an agreement.

It is easy to see what disastrous results may ensue from this situation and to understand why it is the duty of men and women who have enjoyed the benefits of education to see that those benefits are extended to people who have had no education at all.

Ignorance hinders the development of the human personality. According to Professor Jean Piaget, Director of the International Bureau of Education: "The right to intellectual and moral education implies more than a right to acquire knowledge or to be taught, and more than a duty to obey; it means that all men have a right to forge for themselves certain mental and moral weapons of incomparable value; but this they can do only if social conditions are propitious and allow them a certain degree of freedom."<sup>1</sup> Education is thus not only a process of training, but also an indispensable condition for natural development.

Ignorance prevents the democratic ideal from becoming a reality; it prevents men from realizing their interdependence, the evils that beset or that threaten them, the remedies needed and the understanding which they must acquire if they are to know how to apply those remedies. Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1820: "I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by

J. PIAGET, *Le droit à l'éducation dans le monde actuel*, p. 12. (The Right to Education in the World of Today.)

education." Echoing the words of the great American statesman, Mr. Torres Bodet, speaking in 1951 to the National Commission for Unesco in Washington, said: "As peace is indivisible, so are democracy and social progress indivisible. As long as one half of the human race is unable to read the very declaration of its rights and duties, to understand the text of a law, to consult the most elementary books on agriculture and machinery, it will continue to be at the mercy of forces which it can neither control nor comprehend. And we would have to admit that democracy does not reign on earth."

But it is important that education should not serve as a pretext to turn people into docile supporters of an ideology used to justify a totalitarian system of government. The last world war showed clearly the results of a form of education based neither on respect for humanity as a whole nor on respect for man as an individual. Every human being should be given the opportunity to develop his mental faculties to the full, and to acquire knowledge and a sense of moral values to guide his intellectual activities, until he has reached the point where he is truly adapted to the society in which he lives.

Today, ignorance breeds want. It stands in the way of scientific and technical progress and the use of modern means to improve the general state of health, preserve natural resources, increase agricultural production and develop industrial undertakings. The eradication of illiteracy cannot, of course, suffice in itself to raise the peoples' standards of living. The problem as a whole is not strictly educational, but social. Yet various experiments that have been carried out all over the world, and especially in the vast areas where ignorance still prevails, prove that it is almost invariably in areas where ignorance still prevails, prove that it is almost invariably in areas where the majority of the population has had some education that the people aspire to a wider and more advanced form of existence. Communities who continue to follow their old customs and remain entirely cut off from progress in the outside world stagnate in their routine and disintegrate or gradually die out. It is not only an injustice to allow half humanity to remain deprived of the benefits of culture; it is also a grave mistake, for it means that mankind as a whole is deprived of the co-operation of people who, if their abilities were cultivated instead of lying fallow, could make a contribution towards human progress.

Such inequality engenders discord, for it incites the men and women who are still sunk in ignorance and poverty against the other half of the world's population living in relatively prosperous conditions. Also, looking at it from another angle, peoples who are cut off from education can scarcely realize either that they have something to give to other nations or that they have a right to expect assistance from the rest of the human community. An imperfect understanding of the aspirations and needs of their fellowmen may lead people to embark upon dangerous enterprises, following which they sooner or later become victims of the catastrophes they themselves have caused; but they cannot be expected to see this unless they have already been taught the interdependence both of social, economic and political problems and of communities, and unless they have been convinced that it is in their interest, whenever an act of aggression is committed in any part of the world, to present a common front, in accordance with the principle of collective security.

That ignorance varies in degree becomes obvious when one considers the evils for which it is in part responsible. Illiteracy is not the only sign of a lack of education. A knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic does not necessarily lead to the full development of the human personality. It has often been observed that people quickly forget what they have learnt if they do not continue to acquire fresh knowledge. There is nothing to justify the limitation of education to the elementary subjects of reading, writing and arithmetic, which serve only as a basis for a general education, prior to professional training. Here again, Professor Jean Piaget emphasizes that "the right to education is therefore the right of every individual to develop his personality normally, with all the means at his disposal and with the help of society, whose duty it is to turn his abilities to the best possible account".<sup>1</sup>

It was with this in mind that the United Nations expressly recognized the right to education and inserted it in the Universal Declaration adopted in 1948. Human dignity demands that all men be educated with a view to the preservation of justice, freedom and peace. In order that such education may be extended to all men throughout the world, schooling must be free and compulsory. The enormous gulf still separating education as it is from education as it

<sup>1</sup> J. PIAGET, *Le droit à l'éducation dans le monde actuel*, p. 14.

should be, in the sense recognized by the United Nations, can only be bridged gradually. In the first place, there is a difference between the right to elementary and fundamental education—and the right to secondary education, which is not yet universally recognized. In the second place, there is a difference between the right to attend an organized school and the right to receive from that school an education directed "to the full development of the human personality".

The foregoing problems clearly come within the scope of the aims pursued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It is laid down in Unesco's Constitution that the Organization shall "give fresh impulse to popular education and to the spread of culture:

"by collaborating with Members, at their request, in the development of educational activities;

"by instituting collaboration among the nations to advance the ideal of equality of educational opportunity without regard to race, sex or any distinctions, economic or social;

"by suggesting educational methods best suited to prepare the children of the world for the responsibilities of freedom".

The purpose of this pamphlet is to define Unesco's task in the field of education and to give a brief account of the Organization's educational activities up to date, describing results already achieved and projects still in progress. But it is essential, to begin with, to have at least an approximate idea of the present situation.

## THE EVIL

No thorough and complete critical analysis has so far been made of international illiteracy statistics. The most reliable estimates are those produced by countries which actually have a system of compulsory primary education. The number of countries which can supply satisfactory information on this subject has of course steadily increased from one decade to another, as there is a growing tendency to consider illiteracy censuses as a regular feature of population censuses. But it is not yet possible to draw up a complete and accurate list of the needs of mankind as a whole, as far as the campaign against ignorance is concerned.

It can, however, be stated without exaggeration that, out of a world population of 2,378 million inhabitants, there are at least 1,200 million illiterates. This is an enormous figure, and it is all the more disturbing when we reflect that, according to data collected by the United Nations, the world's population is increasing at the rate of 1 per cent per annum; that means an increase of 23 million human beings every year, or 65,000 every day. With every hour that passes, 2,700 future schoolchildren are born and will soon be joining the ranks of those already crying out for teachers, books and equipment.

Regional estimates, at least those for Africa and Asia, are not much more accurate. By comparing information supplied by various countries in the Western Hemisphere, it is estimated that there are some 70 million illiterates on the American continent among inhabitants over 15 years of age. This figure may be broken down as follows: 3,000,000 in North America (United States and Canada), 21,000,000 in Central America and the West Indies, and 46,000,000 in South America.

The proportion of individuals able to read and write is the surest indication of the efficiency of a country's educational system. The spread of primary education during the last century undoubtedly reduced the percentage of illiterates in Europe and North America. Today, the principle of compulsory schooling—an average of six to eight years'

attendance—is accepted by all States. Unfortunately, however, in many countries the laws governing school attendance are not satisfactorily applied. This raises a problem every bit as serious as that of the standard of education among adults, for what is here at stake is the training of the men and women of the future.

Compulsory schooling is not enforced to the same extent in all countries—far from it; the situation even varies within each country. The obstacles in the way of the law's enforcement may be geographical, economic and social, or educational; sometimes these different factors combine to make the situation more complicated and the solution of the problem more difficult.

Among the geographical problems encountered is the fact that in some areas, where the rural population is sparse, the children have to go long distances to the nearest school. In addition, there are often communication difficulties, transport deficiencies, hard climatic conditions and, in some cases, mountainous country. Governments are often unable to set aside sufficient funds for the establishment of a complete network of schools. The fact that parents prefer to put their children to work rather than send them to school is partly due, especially in rural areas, to a low standard of living and to the family's precarious financial situation. Such obstacles to education as a shortage of school buildings or a shortage of teachers are, as a rule, the direct result of financial difficulties.

In hitherto isolated communities, it should be borne in mind that the intellectual level of the adults is extremely low; it is accordingly very difficult to convince them that education is beneficial and that their children will gain by going to school. The survival of certain antiquated notions—for example that it is unnecessary and wrong for girls to be educated—deplorable sanitary conditions, political instability and lack of security, account for a recalcitrance which is often very difficult to overcome.

Lacking as they do even the most elementary knowledge, illiterate populations are unable to revive techniques which have been handed down to them, or to adopt new ones. This means that they are incapable of improving their standard of living. If underdeveloped countries are to be adapted to modern civilization, original educational methods are needed. The individual must be convinced that the education he is receiving will be of immediate advantage.

In countries where modern civilization prevails, it is easier

to ensure school attendance and also to adapt school curricula to the needs of the population. This calls none the less for a constant additional effort on the part of the community. It also demands from educationists and teachers a thorough knowledge of people and their problems.

In these countries, there is no longer any serious opposition to free and compulsory primary education up to 12 or 14 years. Owing to the lack of continuity in education for adolescents, however, the problem of technical and vocational training has generally not been solved. In advanced countries, the normal intellectual and moral development of children continues until about the age of 15. It is only then that each child's particular gifts can be determined with any certainty. Before that time, there is a danger of directing children towards the wrong activities and overlooking important abilities which they have not yet shown. If, therefore, an adolescent is apprenticed immediately after leaving his primary school, this will in most cases hinder the full development of his personality. Yet such is the fate of the majority of young people, and it is still the privilege of a small minority to receive a complete general education. There is a real danger in allowing this state of affairs to continue, for through it a whole host of young people in advanced countries may well become misfits. The situation calls for a general reform of conventional educational systems and, in the immediate future, a great deal of emphasis on vocational training, post-school education and the organization of adult leisure. The working classes which came into being as a result of the concentration of industry, have fought and are still fighting for a fairer distribution of wealth and improved living conditions. Democracy is gradually becoming more of a reality; now that workers have a little more money and a little more leisure, the axiom that all men have an equal right to culture has become a slightly less empty phrase. The idea has now been accepted that every man should be given an opportunity to acquire a certain amount of culture and therefore to lead a fuller life by continuing studies interrupted too early. This has raised the burning question of adult education, which, despite the selfless efforts made during the past 50 years and the establishment, here and there, of institutions for popular education, is still of paramount importance and urgency. How, for instance, are we to save the workers in general from falling a prey to the purveyors of cheap entertainment?

Another pressing need is to make the peoples of the

world realize that they are interdependent, that it is in their interests to co-operate, and that true international understanding would bring with it immeasurable advantages. The emergence of a world outlook has barely begun, and the education which is a prerequisite for it is still in the tentative stage.

Whether we are concerned with the situation in under-developed or in advanced countries, with the training of children or the development of the adult personality, the right to education is the same for all. But if that right is to be put into practice, appropriate solutions will have to be found for problems rooted in different causes; widespread campaigns will have to be undertaken and patiently pursued.

## REMEDIES

### COMPULSORY SCHOOLING

The Fourteenth International Conference on Public Education, which met at Geneva in July 1951 and was attended by the representatives of 49 States, adopted a very important recommendation concerning compulsory education and its prolongation.

In this recommendation, intended for Ministries of Education throughout the world, it is suggested that plans for the general application of compulsory education, in the spirit of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, should be drawn up without delay in all countries where the problem arises. These plans should include a whole series of measures to be gradually enforced over a fixed number of years. They should be preceded by careful enquiries into the numbers of pupils affected, based on statistical estimates of the present and future school population. Compulsory education cannot be satisfactorily applied unless plans are co-ordinated with the country's projects for reform and development in the economic and social spheres; but plans for compulsory education should be given priority. These plans should be flexible and subject to continual amendment and re-adaptation in the light both of the results obtained and of changes in the general situation. They should be widely publicized, and their value both to individuals and to society stressed, so as to secure the complete and unreserved backing of public opinion. A point for consideration is whether such a campaign should be launched immediately on a country-wide scale, or confined at first to certain zones (towns, rural areas, etc.), in order to avoid dispersal of effort. The campaign should be conducted simultaneously for boys and for girls.

As a shortage of funds is the greatest obstacle to the general application of compulsory education, the financial aspect of the plans for enforcement should be studied very carefully. That study should cover not only possible sources of funds but also a scheme of expenditure, so as to ensure the

best use of the money. Widespread publicity should be given to the financial side of the plans, in order to convince public opinion that, since all educational progress is reflected sooner or later in a considerable increase in the national revenue, investment in education is sound policy.

The period of compulsory education should not be too short, especially in countries where the language problem arises, that is to say, where it may be necessary to use a local language in teaching as well as the language officially spoken in the country. No child should leave school until the knowledge acquired at school has been sufficiently instilled into him to be lasting and to enable him to play his full part in the life of the community.

In countries where the period of compulsory education has already been fixed at five, six, seven or more years, there should be no question of curtailment, even if a large proportion (in some cases over 50 per cent) of the children of school age are evading the compulsory education provisions; in such cases, the enforcement plan should concentrate on gradually bringing practice into line with the law. It is desirable that, in countries where the difference between the number of children of school age and those enrolled in schools does not exceed 20 to 30 per cent, and where compulsory education seems likely to be applied generally in the near future, the period of such education should be gradually extended to seven or eight years.

The prolongation of compulsory education beyond the age of 14 or 15, whether on a full-time basis, on a part-time basis, or in connexion with primary education or with the various branches of secondary education, is particularly to be encouraged in countries where compulsory education provisions are already fully enforced. The age at which children are authorized by law to take up employment should correspond to the school-leaving age, which implies complete co-ordination between the national education and labour authorities. Such co-ordination is necessary, not only at the national level, but also at the international level between organizations concerned with compulsory education and those concerned with the conditions of work of children and young people.

Since the principle of the right to education is now firmly established, the education authorities should, as far as possible, create the necessary institutions and take effective steps to curtail exemption—whether provided for in legislation or allowed by custom—in the case of children who are ill, physically or morally handicapped, living far from a

school, etc. Some provision can be made for the education of children whose parents have no fixed abode (showmen, bargees, etc.) by setting up boarding schools or organizing correspondence or broadcast courses. Special arrangements are required for the education of the children of nomadic tribes and this is a problem that must be faced by the education authorities; in some circumstances a satisfactory solution is provided by travelling schools.

A periodic census of the children of school age should be taken in each district, as a means of supervising the application of compulsory education. In obvious cases of intentional failure by parents or guardians to comply with compulsory education regulations, the imposition of penalties may have good results; but the general policy should be one of encouragement. It is essential that families and teachers should co-operate; parents' associations, as well as officials of the local authority and social workers, can render very real assistance in cases of failure to comply with the regulations. Free primary education should not mean merely exemption from the payment of school fees; it should also be extended gradually to include school materials, equipment and textbooks. Where communities are scattered over a large area, the resultant difficulty may be overcome as far as circumstances allow, by the better siting of schools, provision of transport facilities, and establishment of boarding schools. School medical services, meals and (where necessary) clothing services, should be more widespread, as, besides being valuable in themselves, they are an encouragement to school attendance; it would therefore be advantageous for school authorities to organize such services, even where social aid of this kind is provided by other official or private bodies. Family allowances are also an encouragement to school attendance in that they compensate for the inability of children of school age to earn money, which is one of the causes of absenteeism.

To enable parents to appreciate more fully the work done by schools, and to win their warmer approval of compulsory education, schools should be identified as closely as possible with the community; they should play their part in raising the community's standard of living and should contribute to its social, economic, civic, artistic and cultural progress. With these ends in view, schools should adopt curricula adapted to the children, and techniques such as active methods, which relate education to the children's environment, arouse their interest and inspire them with a desire to improve that environment. In communities where there is a large propor-

tion of illiteracy, it is important that plans for the general application of compulsory education should be accompanied, as far as possible, by plans for adult education; parents will thus be more inclined to welcome education for their children, and there will be greater understanding between children leaving school and their elders. All adult education work should be closely co-ordinated with that of the ordinary schools. The language problem, in certain countries, is a formidable obstacle to the general application of compulsory education; whilst, therefore, the use of vernacular (unwritten) languages may, in principle, be effective, the solution sought for each of these countries should fit the individual case, taking account of national, regional or local conditions and of findings in the fields of child psychology and educational science.

The key factor in any campaign for compulsory education is the teacher himself. The present shortage of teachers is one of the obstacles to the general application of compulsory education, and great efforts should therefore be made to remedy the situation. Teachers should be offered salaries commensurate with the importance of their work; they should have security of tenure; and there should be a sufficient number of training colleges. Teachers' training should become steadily more thorough and complete, as regards both general culture and professional training proper. It is sometimes necessary to institute shortened training courses, but such courses should be regarded only as emergency measures. Opportunities for further training (study periods, educational missions, holiday courses, education journals, etc.) should be available to all teachers, whether they have taken a normal or shortened course of training.

Professional training should enable teachers, especially those in rural areas, not only to master the technicalities of teaching, but also to play an active part in the life and work of the community. They must understand the people among whom they are to live and be familiar with their customs, needs and aspirations. They must be actively instrumental in educating the community in the spheres of general culture, hygiene, handicrafts, agriculture, etc. Where teachers in rural areas have to work in particularly difficult conditions, school authorities should endeavour to find ways of compensating them.

All plans for the general application of compulsory education should be accompanied by school building programmes, covering not only schools but also, where necessary, living

accommodation for teachers. The siting of schools should be carefully studied, with due regard to the distribution of the school population and to the distance that children will have to travel to school. School building programmes should take account, so far as available funds permit, of educational requirements and of health and climatic conditions in the localities where the schools are to be erected. It may sometimes be advisable to let the people help in the construction of their own schools, though this would in no way absolve the authorities from their responsibility in the matter. Emergency measures may be contemplated to meet the most pressing needs; for instance, prefabricated schools, tents, the temporary use of buildings not originally intended as schools, etc. Wherever possible, schools should have, besides a playground and courtyard, a workshop and a field or garden. In places where the climate is suitable, open-air schools, which have advantages from the educational, economic and health points of view, may provide a solution to the building problem. School building should form an integral part of all town-planning, so that a sufficient number of schools may be provided for and built.

The above are the main points of the recommendation adopted by the Fourteenth International Conference on Public Education.

#### PROLONGATION OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

As we have already observed, it is not enough to provide primary education up to 12 to 14 years. This problem is on the way to being solved in a number of countries. But there is a great deal more opposition to the idea that primary education should be followed by an additional course of studies designed not only to increase young people's general culture, but also to develop their particular aptitudes. The International Conference on Public Education has twice (in 1934 and 1951) discussed the question of prolonging compulsory education. These discussions revealed how greatly the fundamental questions of justice with regard to education, and the right to education, are affected by such factors as the industrial or professional structure of a given society, or, in other words, by the division of society into classes.

Secondary education today is not compulsory, with the result that certain categories of pupils are able to reach a

standard which enables them to go on to a university, or at least to take their secondary school leaving certificate, whilst others are obliged to give up all their school studies and enter employment direct from primary school. The question therefore arises of what criteria to adopt in selecting pupils for secondary education, and of what guidance is available to help pupils in their choice of an occupation.

To remedy the present situation, the right to secondary education might perhaps be extended to all children. This would involve the fixing of a uniform upper and lower age-limit for the period of compulsory education, and the provision to families of the necessary means to meet this additional expense. The problem would then arise of the various possible kinds of secondary education, and the way in which pupils should be assisted to choose between them. Professor Jean Piaget draws attention to the fact that "the general culture conferred by secondary education ought not, as people so often imagine, to be purely academic (literary, scientific, or both), unrelated to the fabric of society as a whole. It should make pupils see that the different aspects of social life—practical, technical, scientific or artistic—are factors in an organic whole. It should present history to them not merely as a record of political and military events, but as the story of civilization."<sup>1</sup> With regard to vocational guidance, the Director of the International Bureau of Education emphasizes the importance of using psychological methods of examination. More and more countries are accepting this view; there is at present a strong movement in favour of organizing educational psychology services and of giving teachers themselves a psychological training. Psychologists, for their part, have done much in the study of mental development, differing abilities, and methods of investigation designed to enable the degree of mental development and particular aptitudes of children to be determined.

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is very definite on the subject of the prolongation of compulsory education; even if, for reasons of national economy, free schooling is temporarily restricted to primary education, "technical and professional education shall be made generally available" and "higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit". In other words, whatever profession a pupil may ultimately follow, he has a right to secondary education. This right includes professional training

<sup>1</sup> J. PIAGET, *Le droit à l'éducation dans le monde actuel*, p. 21.

for any occupation, since the decision whether a pupil should be prepared for one of the liberal professions—i.e. whether he should have access to education at university level—should be based on merit and not on considerations of class or race.

Similarly, the International Conference on Public Education has recommended that those countries where compulsory education is already the established rule should draw up, as soon as possible, a scheme for the gradual extension of the period of schooling. Financial aid might be considered, when necessary, for families with limited means, especially at the time when children are of an age to begin work, to compensate them for the loss of earnings, and enable them to allow their children to continue studies for which they have shown an aptitude. This extended schooling should be adapted to the gifts and interests of the individual child, as well as to social and economic needs, and should draw on all the resources of modern culture. A wide choice of studies should be offered to the pupils, with plenty of opportunity for obtaining guidance, transferring from one subject to another, and making up for lost ground in subjects in which they are backward. The treatment of scientific and technical studies should be broad enough to enable pupils specializing in them to acquire at the same time a background of general culture. There should be adequate co-ordination between the various types of schools for extended education (classical and modern, or technical and vocational, at the secondary level) to facilitate transfer from one type to another and to ensure more rational selection and guidance. Efficient continuation classes should be organized, in the employer's time, to enable young people already in employment, between school-leaving age and the age of 18, to improve both their professional ability and their general culture.

#### ADULT EDUCATION

Any man who, after acquiring a little knowledge at school, has had to concentrate on the tricks of his trade from the moment he was apprenticed to it, becomes increasingly aware, as his judgment matures, of the complexity of the problems facing individuals and society. Gradually he realizes that the evolution of such problems and his own position in society are closely connected. He then feels impelled to form an opinion of his own, to take part in affairs which influence

his daily life and in any plans that might enliven his work and leisure. These aspirations are the justification for adult education.

Adult education was originally intended to provide instruction for people who, as children, had been unable to attend school. Its aim now is to enable everyone to lead a fuller life, to equip everyone to live more in accordance with the ideal of the dignity of Man.

This education starts by trying to give workers a clearer understanding of the ins and outs of their work. The object here is to save them from becoming mere machine-tenders, knowing nothing of the production on which they are engaged, beyond their own particular job. It helps them to understand how their work fits into the general pattern of production and consumption, what their position is in the community in which they live, how that community forms an integral part of the nation as a whole, and how the nation is related to the rest of the world. It equips workers to engage in some manual or mental activity that will counterbalance their routine work and thus enrich their personalities.

Adult education enables every man to shoulder the economic, social, civic and political responsibilities of a free citizen, not only in his own workshop or trade union, but in the wider field of the city and the world. Whilst respecting the freedom of all, it enables the individual, through his increased abilities, to make better use of that freedom.

Lastly, adult education is directed towards the full physical, moral, intellectual and artistic development of the human personality. It does not burden the memory with a stock of useless information, but aims at developing logical thought and powers of expression. Nor are its gifts to the worker purely scholastic; it also sets up institutions where he can become acquainted with the discoveries of science and the masterpieces of art, hitherto reserved for a privileged few. It seeks to bridge the gap between the intellectual and the man in the street, and to foster international understanding by making the various national cultures more widely known.

In pursuing the foregoing aims, it is essential to adopt new educational methods, such as study groups and discussion groups. So-called audio-visual aids (films, exhibitions, etc.), radio, theatre and modern language teaching should be made available to all, and libraries and museums should be increasingly accessible. By establishing cultural centres in town and country districts, training the necessary teachers, conducting surveys and expanding the programme of tourist travel for

workers, it should be possible to provide all adults with opportunities for broadening their education and steadily developing their personality.

#### FUNDAMENTAL EDUCATION

Deprived of the benefits of civilization, the majority of human beings have unfortunately not yet reached the stage of having any education to improve upon. As James Yen, the founder of the popular education movement in China, remarked: "Three-quarters of the world's population are underfed and illiterate." It is therefore an elementary form of education, henceforth called "fundamental education", with a direct bearing on the evils from which these millions are suffering, that is the most urgent need.

Fundamental education is particularly intended for the underdeveloped areas of the world, which may be whole regions or isolated groups surrounded by economically more advanced communities. In such areas, educational and social welfare services are generally merged and the expression "fundamental education" covers them all. Its scope diminishes gradually as institutions and services are created to meet specific needs. For example, one of the aims of fundamental education is to establish a well-organized system of primary education, available to all children. Until that objective has been achieved, primary schools will be considered together with adult literacy campaigns, as forming part of the programme for the general development of a given community.

It is of course not possible to determine the minimum education desirable for mankind as a whole. The ability to read and write is generally recognized as essential; but this is only a means to a much wider end, which varies in accordance with the values of each individual culture. It is, however, possible to describe a minimum education programme for a given community at a given moment: that programme must include whatever factors are considered necessary to enable the population to lead a healthy, active life.

On the other hand, it is impossible to describe fundamental education purely in terms of individual needs; it is for adults and adolescents as well as for children. The "minimum" programme must take account of the needs of the community as a whole, and collective methods should be applied to the solution of the various problems. This shows how essential

it is to have specialized staff, "experts" and instructors with a long experience of social service.

Although fundamental education should cover all human activities, each local campaign should aim in the first place at solving the most urgent problems. For instance, when the population's health is undermined by endemic diseases, a campaign to raise the general standard of health, combining medical instruction with curative medicine, ought probably to be launched even before the first school is built.

The health campaign is, however, a very special case. A more usual example is offered by fundamental education campaigns in the vast rural areas of the world. The peasant populations who supply the world's basic requirements have to wage ceaseless war against material difficulties. They are often oppressed by the prevailing social and economic system. And, as a rule, they do not possess the scientific knowledge and the techniques that would enable them to improve their situation and lead fuller and more useful lives. In such cases, fundamental education is of great assistance in improving agricultural methods and social conditions. Where, in addition, it is able to check the waste of natural resources caused by erosion and improvident cultivation, it makes a valuable contribution to the world's peace and prosperity.

The poor districts of industrial towns are quite as obviously in need of minimum fundamental education. In this case, the campaign may chiefly consist in teaching to read and write, inaugurating evening classes, or organizing collective activities designed to enable people to make better use of their leisure or to give the school a more active part in community life. In urban districts, there are generally some institutions for social welfare and adult education. All of these are, in fact, carrying out fundamental education programmes; what is required is therefore to co-ordinate their work rather than to launch fresh projects.

The aim of fundamental education is "to help people to achieve the social and economic progress which will enable them to take their place in the modern world". Education alone, however, is not enough to raise a community's standard of living. Educational campaigns should be accompanied by projects for economic development, which may, in some cases, include the creation of local industries. The greatest possible use should be made of natural resources, and the setting up of co-operatives will help the population to work for its own advancement. Fundamental education and the standard of living are very closely related. In the first place, there can

be no economic progress unless the people are taught techniques and methods and the principles of co-operation; in the second place, where education is seen to bring with it an improved standard of living, it is likely to be accepted by the population and to take permanent root.

Fundamental education is most needed in areas where there is a high percentage of illiteracy. But the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic is not an end in itself. It merely opens up wider horizons. Where there is already a desire to learn to read and write, the first move in the fundamental education campaign might be to teach the population to do so, using simple texts calculated to give them an inkling of other subjects and awaken new interests. For people who have no desire to learn, the fundamental education programme should be directed in the first place to arousing that desire and later to satisfying it.

Special problems may arise in cases where there are several languages or local dialects. Often the only solution will then be to teach a second language or an auxiliary language, provided it is sufficiently developed to have a literature of its own.

The normal tool for teaching is the textbook, but it has its limitations. Fundamental education programmes have to present information and ideas as vividly as possible; they must therefore make use of all available methods (debates and practical demonstrations) and all modern audio-visual aids (cinema, filmstrips and radio). These aids are particularly useful in areas where the population cannot read. Similarly, museum and library techniques should be adapted to the needs of illiterates and of those who have only recently learnt to read and write; they will then be a valuable factor in fundamental education programmes.

Fundamental education should also help peoples to develop what is best in their own culture, and this calls for a new conception of educational aims and methods in underdeveloped countries. The local culture will include traditional forms of expression which should be given a place in the programme. It is still more important that the educator should show sympathy and understanding. Technically backward peoples may have nobler human qualities, values and traditions than those to be found among more industrialized communities. More precisely, the idea of "progress" is relative. Those responsible for fundamental education refuse to accept the view that illiterates, like children, should have progress thrust upon them, either by force or by the use of rigid methods introduced by well-meaning foreigners. Funda-

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mental education aims at enabling the individual to take an active part in shaping his own future. This method may appear slow, but no lasting progress can be made without the support and understanding of the population concerned.

Fundamental education should always fit in with the existing educational system, whether local or national. Education at the higher, secondary or technical levels, though not of course included in fundamental education, is necessary to its existence. Universities, secondary schools and technical schools, besides providing the community with its leaders and its teachers, also provide staff for the popular education movement and give those members of the community who are particularly anxious to teach the opportunity to follow their vocation.

It is essential that fundamental education should form part of a more general scheme. Its object is to enable the individual to adjust himself smoothly to his social and material environment, for which purpose its programme must be in keeping with education at other levels, and with work for social welfare and economic development. At Unesco's General Conference in 1947, the delegates of more than 40 Member States recognized that all States having under their jurisdiction areas where the educational standard was below a reasonable minimum and where ignorance, sickness and poverty still prevailed, ought, as a duty, to prepare and carry out national fundamental education programmes. The next step was to determine the general lines on which these programmes should be drawn up and implemented, on the understanding, of course, that they would have to vary from one area to another.

It has proved more practical and effective to begin with a few projects in areas where intensive work was needed. The site chosen—which may be a village, a group of villages, a rural district, an area inhabited by a single tribe or cultural group, or a zone bounded by natural frontiers—should present a certain uniformity. If the project includes the training of teachers or specialists recruited from the region selected or from neighbouring districts, these will soon form an active nucleus from which fundamental education can spread to the rest of the population. An undertaking of this kind provides opportunities for the organizers themselves to try out methods and equipment, and the results of these experiments will be useful in other regions.

Every project should be designed to meet the particular needs of the region selected. It is often desirable to concen-

trate at the outset on one important local problem, such as soil erosion, the existence of an endemic disease, etc., or on cultivating the population's special abilities, for instance by developing a certain handicraft or small industry. Other parts of the programme should gradually be put into execution, as the population begins to appreciate their usefulness. If the plans for economic development are related to the education programmes, the result will be doubly beneficial. Fundamental education will enable the programme for economic development to be carried out more easily, whilst, for material and moral reasons, economic progress will contribute to the furtherance of education.

Once the site for a project has been chosen, it is essential, especially in a rural district, to begin with a survey on the spot. This should be conducted by a small group of experts, headed preferably by an ethnologist, who would be assisted by specialists in other fields, such as agriculture, medicine, nutrition, soil conservation, etc. As the survey proceeds, it should be possible to put some of the data collected to practical use in education, i.e. to move on from pure research to applied science. The survey is intended primarily to provide the elements for a general plan for the improvement of the community's standard of living, as well as to let educators know what problems they will have to tackle, the order in which they should deal with them and the considerations they should bear in mind in choosing their methods. It is clearly impossible to draw a sharp dividing line between the conclusion of the survey and the launching of the programme. It is important that one or more of the people who took part in the survey should co-operate directly in the execution of the project.

The project is carried out by field teams. This method has two advantages. Firstly, it allows of co-operation between those members who have the particular knowledge required for a detailed study of the community's needs, problems and resources, and those who are specialized in the techniques to be imparted later to the local population. Secondly, when the staff is divided into teams under a single leader, the work of each team is clearly part of a comprehensive plan covering every aspect of the community's life. The choice of the specialist to direct the operation depends upon the main purpose of the project.

In the regular course of work, each member of the team has, in addition to his special duties, to do something to further the education of the community. Thus the doctor,

besides dealing with cases of sickness, is responsible for training assistants, supervising medical services and devising ways of persuading the population to build a new clinic or a small hospital. All educational work should aim at improving social organization and promoting social activities. Members of the community should be tactfully persuaded to form committees or councils of their own to deal with questions of common interest. This will show which members of the community have a gift for leadership and, through the instruction given to the local committees or leaders by members of the team of experts, the community will gradually acquire teachers of its own who have gained a certain amount of specialized knowledge. The team should always bear in mind that its duty is to help the population to help itself. As time goes on, the organizers of the project will therefore withdraw into the background and confine themselves to giving advice.

A fundamental education project need not necessarily be a complete innovation from the start. On the contrary, there is often an institution, such as a teachers' training centre or a hospital, which has been operating in the community for some time and has thus already made some contribution towards fundamental education. In that case, a few additional experts should be called in so that a well-balanced plan can be drawn up, both for the preliminary survey and for the ensuing action. Close co-operation should be maintained with the parent institution, but the latter should not be given too important a place in the fundamental education project as a whole.

It would be feasible to have both a fundamental education centre operating on the above lines in each of the vast underdeveloped areas of the world, and offshoots of those centres at various points within each zone. A bold experiment of this sort—for which there is obviously an urgent need—might well be the “sort of universal antidote to ignorance, misunderstanding, illusion and error” for which Comenius longed. Success in this field depends above all on the understanding and constant co-operation of all the nations of the world. To secure that co-operation is clearly within Unesco's sphere.

## UNESCO'S TASK

Unesco is one of the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations. It was set up in 1945. All its Member States, which numbered 65 in April 1952, have accepted the principles laid down in its Constitution. They have thus declared that "the purpose of Unesco is to advance, through the educational, scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world, the objectives of international peace and of the common welfare of mankind". They have recognized "that the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil". Lastly, they have stated that "the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind".

Three main fields of work are prescribed for Unesco by its Constitution. The first is to "collaborate in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples through all means of mass communication"; the second is to "give fresh impulse to popular education and to the spread of culture"; the third is "to maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge". The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, confirms the objectives laid down for Unesco in its Constitution by proclaiming that "Everyone has the right to education", "Everyone has the right to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits". Unesco's aims thus have a direct bearing on the ignorance which still afflicts more than half the world's population and on the remedies it calls for.

The "Basic Programme", drawn up in 1950, describes the principles underlying the Organization's work. It defines Unesco's policy with regard to education as follows:

"Unesco's task is to help Member States to ensure that their educational systems are adequate in every way to meet the needs of society and of the individual. The world is changing so rapidly as to provoke one of the gravest crises of history. Moral and spiritual factors are given insufficient play. Ways

of thought and life have not been adjusted to the discoveries of science and technology. Methods of teaching need re-examination; educational facilities require expansion.

"The campaign against illiteracy, the need to increase the supply of teachers and technicians and to develop adult education, and the birth of new educational ideas and methods—all call for consideration by Member States. In various countries efforts have been made to overcome the difficulties raised. Exchange of information about these efforts, discussion, and stimulation to experiment will all be necessary for the educational progress which the society of the future will require.

"In addition to helping Member States to improve their existing educational systems, Unesco takes the initiative in helping them to extend these systems to meet new needs. In some parts of the world schools are almost unknown; illiteracy is prevalent, and even on the increase. Everywhere there is a need for the development of adult education. Finally, there are deficient or handicapped children for whom special treatment is required. Whatever their present handicaps, all human beings ought to be given the chance to take an active part in a common civilization.

"From the standpoint of Unesco, better methods of education and a wider diffusion of literacy are not, however, ends in themselves. The final object must be to equip man to play his part harmoniously in the modern world. Today it is no longer enough that he should know his own land and his own people; he lives in a network of relationships that go beyond frontiers. In the modern world, all nations are inter-dependent, and they must learn to recognize it."

From these general comments it will be seen that Unesco's education programme falls under three main heads:

#### **IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATION THROUGH THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION**

"More progress could be achieved, and many mistakes avoided, if the experiments being made throughout the world in education and psychology were better known. Unesco collects information about such experiments, analyses it, and promotes its distribution, with the object of improving methods of teaching and furthering the international purposes of Unesco. Collection may often involve research, and analysis is generally undertaken with the help of experts."

## **EXTENSION OF EDUCATION**

"Opportunity in life depends for every man upon his opportunities for education. Hence Unesco has the duty of helping Member States to ensure for everybody whose education has been neglected, interrupted or impeded, the chance to overcome his handicaps. Unesco cannot afford to neglect any sphere of education, but it must, for the reasons given, pay special attention to fundamental and adult education, and to the training of handicapped children."

## **EDUCATION FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING**

"The consciousness of the unity of mankind is still rudimentary and undeveloped. Teachers are only beginning to discover suitable methods; textbooks need to be improved. School-children know little about the international organizations of today and the services they can render to world peace and prosperity. Moreover, there are limits to what children can be expected to understand. Unesco must therefore help competent organizations and institutions in promoting education for living in a world community."

Such are the considerations by which Unesco has been guided in its efforts over the past six years to make the right to education a reality. Something should now be said about the results which its unfailing efforts have already produced.

## UNESCO'S ACHIEVEMENTS

Unesco's twofold aim in the field of education is thus to give an increasingly wide significance to the right to education proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to ensure that this positive right is extended to all mankind and recognized as a common birthright. Its three tasks of improving education through the exchange of information, extending education, and promoting education for international understanding, give rise to many different, though related, activities.

First and foremost, education must be extended to areas where it is still utterly lacking and where the standard of living is therefore dangerously low. The extension of education also implies instruction for adults, to fill in the gaps left by inadequate schooling. As this kind of instruction does not always fit into a regular educational system, it calls for special methods, such as study groups, surveys, missions, publications, etc. Where there is a total or partial absence of teaching materials, documentation collected by Unesco often serves to make good the deficiency. But a more radical solution is needed for the problem of producing materials and training teachers for fundamental education, and it was for this reason that the Organization decided to set up international fundamental education centres, the first of which is already operating.

Clearly, the extension of education goes beyond campaigns for fundamental education and adult education. Existing forms of education must be improved and, immediately, there arises the problem of the extension and improvement of compulsory schooling. Where public education is inadequate, it must be put on a satisfactory footing; whilst in countries which have a system of compulsory education efforts should be made to bring about a decrease in the number of evasions and a prolongation of the period of compulsory schooling.

Lastly, if we admit that the purpose of education is to produce mentally and physically sound individuals, well adapted to the world in which they are to live, we must also admit that, even in countries where education is satisfactory

according to traditional standards, a new and urgent task has arisen as the result of global-political developments and the imperative need for sympathy and understanding between individuals and nations if peace is to be preserved. If a better understanding is to be fostered between the nations, if people are to be fitted to live in a world community, educational problems must be approached from a new angle, and the points on which Unesco should act must be determined. Work is already in progress in certain spheres—curricula, teaching methods and materials, teaching about the United Nations and Human Rights, youth organizations and movements—which together cover the whole range of problems raised by education for international understanding.

Each of these activities should be considered as part of a general effort to adapt education to the requirements of the modern world. This does not involve a break with former methods, but rather the correlation of this seemingly new departure in education with traditional systems and with fundamental education, itself a first step towards securing equality of status and opportunity for all mankind.

#### IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATION THROUGH THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

##### *Education Clearing House*

With such a vast programme to execute, Unesco has to keep in touch as far as possible with all educational developments throughout the world, and must be able to provide Member States, organizations and individuals working in education with comparative information. That is the task of the Clearing House.

In all its enquiries and studies, the Clearing House works in close co-operation with the International Bureau of Education at Geneva. In conjunction with the latter, it makes preparations for the International Conferences on Public Education. At these conferences an annual survey is made of educational developments in the States represented, all of them Members of Unesco. Specific problems are also discussed, such as the free provision of school supplies, physical education in secondary schools, the teaching of reading and writing, the teaching of psychology as part of the training of school teachers, the introduction to mathematics and natural

science in primary schools, the teaching of handicrafts in secondary schools, the problem of school meals and clothing, and (at the most recent meetings) compulsory education and its prolongation. The conclusions of the IBE's report on the professional training of teachers were prepared with the help of Unesco's Clearing House.

The latter also keeps in constant touch with the International Association of Universities and its bureau. Both were founded in 1951 and are housed at Unesco's headquarters. They act as a centre for the exchange of information on all matters relating to universities, in particular the standardization of university statistics and of data on higher education in underdeveloped areas.

In addition, the Clearing House maintains contact with national educational documentation centres.

The information which it derives from these various sources enables it to make a systematic analysis of specialized publications and statistics. It is thus able to prepare general studies in comparative education designed for publication as works of reference, such as the *World Handbook of Educational Organization and Statistics* and the *International Directory of Adult Education*. The Clearing House also undertakes particular studies related explicitly to Unesco's programme resolutions; it examines the reports of administering Powers on education in trust territories; it has published a series of studies on free and compulsory education in certain countries, and is conducting research on the use of vernacular languages in general education.

The Clearing House further replies to the numerous enquiries reaching Unesco on education in all countries. In particular, it supplies documentation for members of missions, experts, associated projects and seminars.

A "Monthly Contact Letter" is sent at regular intervals to educators who have attended the international seminars organized by Unesco and to those taking part in associated projects in fundamental education in different parts of the world. The number of experts in this new discipline is still small. A card directory of such experts has therefore been prepared for use when missions are requested by Member States or when expert advice is needed on specific points; Unesco has the names of some 500 experts, together with information on their previous experience and present occupation.

Statistics for one month, for instance January 1951, give an idea of the amount of analysis and correspondence done by the Clearing House. During this period, it analysed the

contents of somme 450 periodicals and 200 books, replied to 100 requests for information and compiled special documents for technical assistance projects in Colombia, Indonesia and Lebanon, for the expert sent to Thailand and the Liga Independiente de Alfabetizacion in Ecuador.

Lastly, the Clearing House is responsible for disseminating the information which it has collected. Its publications include the periodical *Bulletin of Fundamental and Adult Education*, "Education Abstracts", "Occasional Papers in Education", and a series of *Monographs in Fundamental Education*.

### *Educational Missions*

The main purpose of the international missions of educators organized by Unesco is to supply technical advice and assistance to Member States requesting them. To carry out their task successfully, these missions need, besides their own resources, the help of the Clearing House. The latter compiles for each team of experts as complete a set of documents as possible on the country concerned, and also sends to the country any information that may be useful. In return, the thorough study of certain educational problems made by missions on the spot provides valuable data for the Clearing House. The despatch of missions is thus one of the most effective ways of improving education through the exchange of information.

Unesco has sent educational missions to the following countries:

Philippines, to study primary and secondary teaching and adult education, including their administration and financing and the training of teachers;

Thailand, to assist the Government in reforming its educational system and, particularly, in conducting a widespread campaign against illiteracy as part of a well organized fundamental education programme;

Afghanistan, to conduct enquiries on primary and secondary education, and also on technical and vocational training;

Bolivia, to advise the authorities on the organization of a national campaign against illiteracy;

Union of Burma, to assist the Government in planning for the institution of compulsory primary education;

India, to study the question of adult education in rural communities;

Pakistan, to give the Government advice regarding the

development of fundamental education and education for women, the organization of a campaign against illiteracy and the production of reading materials.

These missions were sent in 1949, 1950 and 1951. Each of them has produced results, and the Governments concerned have asked Unesco to send experts to assist them in carrying out the missions' recommendations. In March 1952, other missions went to Ecuador, to organize the inspection of schools; to Iraq, to study ways of developing vocational training; to Syria, to start an educational statistical service; and to Nigeria, to examine the problem of the use vernacular languages in education.

As a result of the adoption by the United Nations of a programme of Technical Assistance for Economic Development, and Unesco's participation in this programme, it has been possible, since 1950, to send a larger number of educators to countries requesting them. Afghanistan, Ceylon, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Peru, Philippines, Syria, Thailand and Union of Burma have already profited, or are now profiting, from this new method of improving education.

#### EXTENSION OF EDUCATION

##### *Compulsory Education and its Prolongation*

A distinction should be drawn between Unesco's contribution to a general movement to ensure free and compulsory education throughout the world, and the direct assistance afforded by the Organization to countries encountering serious difficulties in this respect.

As regards the *first point*, in pursuance of a decision taken by its General Conference in 1949, Unesco studied the problems involved in making free compulsory primary education more nearly universal and of longer duration throughout the world. The investigation was conducted with the help of the International Bureau of Education, which has published the enquiry made on the same subject in 1934. In this connexion, Unesco published monographs on primary education in the following six countries: Australia, Ecuador, France, Iraq, Thailand and United Kingdom, where the systems varied or where a different stage of development had been reached. Two other studies, one of them prepared by the International Labour Organisation, were published on the prolongation of

the period of schooling and the employment of child labour. The results of these various investigations were submitted to the Fourteenth International Conference on Public Education, held at Geneva in 1951, whose recommendations amount to a universal programme for the full application of compulsory education.<sup>1</sup>

But it is not enough to formulate principles, even if they are universally valid. They must also be adapted to the particular circumstances of different countries. A year before the Geneva Conference, an inter-American seminar on primary education was held at Montevideo, in 1950, under the joint auspices of the Organization of American States, Unesco and the Government of Uruguay. The recommendations issued by that seminar to interested Governments and to international organizations supplement the proposals of the Fourteenth International Conference on Public Education, in so far as they apply to that particular region. Unesco undertook to publish and disseminate the latter proposals. It communicated them to Governments with a request that they be translated and that any relevant comments be forwarded to the Organization. At the same time, Unesco informed Member States that, if they so desired, it could assist them in preparing a national plan of compulsory education. The first Conference of National Commissions for Unesco in Asia and the South Pacific, held in Bangkok at the end of 1951, also discussed, among other matters, the question of compulsory education. Two regional conferences of experts on primary education are to be held in South-East Asia and the Near East; these meetings will be similar to the Montevideo seminar. Unesco is making the preliminary arrangements and collecting the necessary documentation.

With regard to the *second point*, direct assistance sometimes takes the form of the despatch of missions or experts to countries requesting them. This has been done for Philippines, Thailand, Afghanistan and Union of Burma, and later Colombia, Indonesia, Costa Rica and Libya. The work to be done by the experts varies from one country to another. They may take part in organizing national seminars or make a direct study of the educational situation with the help of the authorities. In the latter case, they decide what action or reforms are necessary; they also propose to the Government a general plan and immediate measures for the creation of a new system or the improvement of the existing system. This preliminary enquiry is generally followed by direct

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "Remedies", pp. 11-24.

assistance from Unesco to enable the first measures advocated to be carried out.

To take an example, the mission sent to Thailand in 1949 recommended that the period of compulsory education should be extended from four to seven years. But there were not enough teachers or school buildings in Thailand. As funds were also short it was clear that the reform could not be introduced immediately throughout the country; it would have to spread gradually. The Government therefore warmly welcomed Unesco's offer to conduct an experiment in a rural district near Bangkok, for the purpose of trying out new educational methods and assessing their results. A 10-year project for rural education, divided into two five-year periods, was worked out. For the first five-year period, now in progress, Unesco has sent a team of experts to get the project under way and to train local staff, who will continue the work during the second five-year period, when it is hoped that it will be possible to extend the experiment gradually to other parts of the country.

Mention should also be made of Unesco's share in the work done by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in the Near East. As a result of co-operation between these two organizations, over 50,000 Arab refugee children from Palestine are now being provided with primary education; the children are taught in tents or brick buildings.

### *Fundamental Education*

Fundamental education is defined as "that kind of minimum and general education which aims to help children and adults, who do not have the advantages of formal education, to understand the problems of their immediate environment and their rights and duties as citizens and individuals, and to participate more effectively in the economic and social progress of their community". Since its foundation, Unesco has concerned itself with this enormously important problem; it has tried to determine the extent of illiteracy and studied all attempts so far made to combat it. It has endeavoured to draw up a general policy applicable throughout the world, and to decide the nature and extent of its own share in the campaign against the widespread evil of ignorance.

To this end, several committees of experts have been convened at Unesco House in Paris; their findings have been published and have given rise to many interesting and useful discussions. Two regional conferences, one at Nanking and

the other at Mexico City, were organized in 1947. They were followed by two seminars in 1949. The first of these, held at Quintandinha (Brazil) dealt with the illiteracy problem in North and South America and methods likely to produce better results in preparing and organizing national literacy campaigns; the second, at Mysore (India), studied adult education conditions among rural communities in Asia. A mission of experts was sent to the Near East (Egypt and Iraq), for the production of model materials for fundamental education. Lastly, several experts were commissioned to carry out an enquiry on the selection, classification and use of vernacular languages for purposes of reading and writing, and on the teaching of a second language through the native languages.

Unesco issued a recommendation that any Member States which had not already done so should set up national committees for fundamental and adult education; those committees could rely upon help from the Organization. The replies received showed that the following countries had such committees: Australia, Canada, Colombia, France, Guatemala, Liberia, Netherlands, Philippines, Salvador, Turkey, Union of South Africa, United Kingdom, United States of America and Venezuela.

As was stated earlier, the Education Clearing House, working in collaboration with the Fundamental Education Division, spends a great deal of its time on preparing the necessary material and documents for fundamental education projects and keeps in constant touch with the experts. The latter are few, considering the magnitude of their task, and are generally indispensable in their own country. This general shortage of experts shows how imperative it was for Unesco to take action. It also shows—bearing in mind the slender material and financial resources available to the Organization—that the latter's general campaign against ignorance must be conducted in progressive stages, and that its own efforts must be concentrated on a few particularly efficacious projects.

In carrying out the Technical Assistance Programme, it has been possible to increase the number of missions of experts to underdeveloped areas. In this way, fundamental education experts have already been sent to some countries (Ceylon, Ecuador, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, Liberia and Thailand). At the same time, Unesco follows with close attention the development of activities, often initiated by itself, that are a direct application of new methods likely to prove useful in many

countries: 'pilot projects, associated projects and a world network of regional fundamental education centres.

A "pilot project" is an intensive fundamental education campaign in a limited area; it may be compared to an "experimental laboratory", where educational techniques and methods adapted to the needs of one or several communities are tried out.

For two years, Unesco helped the Chinese popular education movement to produce model films, drawings and other materials required for the education of illiterate adults. Unfortunately, this interesting attempt to apply Western methods to the work of Chinese artists had to be abandoned as a result of political events in that part of the world. The Pehpei centre was closed in May 1950, but the experiment was continued after the departure of the Unesco advisers. Similarly, the Organization helped to improve the quality of educational films and broadcasts for rural communities in Egypt and India.

These activities were limited to the production and use of audio-visual aids. The pilot project launched in 1948 in the Marbial Valley, Haiti, was more far-reaching, for it was to affect the whole life of the 28,000 inhabitants of the valley. The aim of this project is to combat illiteracy, to give the people elementary instruction and teach them a few simple skills which will enable them to improve their standard of living.

It would have been difficult to find an area where social and economic conditions were more deplorable. In the Marbial Valley, situated in the southern part of the island, there are no villages, but only scattered wooden huts. Poverty and ignorance, engendered by disease, erosion and over-population, have spread rapidly through the valley. Trees have been felled so that formerly fertile hillsides are now barren. Meat has become scarce. The children grow up in ignorance, and the whole population has to make super-human efforts to ward off starvation and meet overwhelming debts. As the farmers die, their land is divided up among their children in increasingly small lots, the soil is growing infertile, there are swamps everywhere and the valley is slowly dying.

Before the Marbial project, which was requested by the Haitian Government in 1947, could be launched, a thorough study of local conditions had to be made. The enquiry lasted 18 months, and revealed a great many difficulties. Through the determination of the investigators and the first experts

sent out by Unesco, many obstacles which had at first seemed insuperable were overcome. The chances of success were very slight, for the population was worn down by the buffettings of Nature. It was useless to expect quick and spectacular results, but it was thought that if the project did succeed it would serve as an example for experiments in other tropical regions faced by similar problems.

After barely three years' work, this idea seems to have been fully justified. Slow but definite progress has been made—and more quickly than might have been expected. To begin with, the fundamental education centre had one wooden house. It has since been enlarged considerably, and now consists of a whole group of buildings including an experimental primary school, a small clinic, a dental surgery, a centre for stock-raising and two vegetable gardens, several workshops for handicraft training, a co-operative and a popular education centre for the training of social workers. As the Marbial project has been included in Unesco's Technical Assistance Programme, it will be possible to extend it and train student-teachers to work in other parts of Haiti.

Among the many activities in the field of fundamental education, there are, besides pilot projects, certain schemes that are of value to other countries as well as their country of origin, and are worth continuous study. Unesco gives all possible assistance to these "associated projects", so that they may play their full part in the educational movement either in the country which has organized them or in other countries. It supplies them with a variety of documents and, whenever necessary and possible, sends them either individual experts or teams to help them to introduce new educational methods or to employ existing methods for new purposes.

Some 40 associated projects are now in progress, in independent countries like Australia, in colonial territories like Nigeria, in States like Italy which have long enjoyed self-government, and in countries like India which have recently become independent. The following are examples of such projects:

In Brazil, a national adult education campaign has been launched, including the organization of courses for illiterates and educational broadcasts, the showing of educational films and the creation of travelling libraries.

In India, there is the Delhi project for adult education among rural communities. It is planned to raise the standard of living in 305 villages. The first task is to train a group of 250 teachers who will subsequently teach approximately

125,000 illiterates. These teachers are recruited in the villages themselves, and trained in a school where they gain practical experience in teaching adults from neighbouring communities.

In Italy, a national union has been formed to combat illiteracy mainly in southern Italy.

In Nigeria, there are several regional organizations for adult education.

In the Philippines, the National Federation of Parents' and Teachers' Associations has organized elementary educational courses (reading and writing) for 10,000 adults. It is also working to improve sanitary conditions, raise the standard of health and help adults in rural communities to make more interesting and profitable use of their leisure.

Experience gained from pilot projects and associated projects has shown that the advancement of fundamental education depends to a great degree on the training of qualified teachers and the production of suitable materials. Unesco has concentrated on these problems from the beginning. As part of its regular programme it has collected documentation, made investigations, stimulated research, carried out experiments and organized international seminars through which it has learnt more about these questions and made contact with a growing number of specialists. In this manner, the Organization has been able to move on to the stage of constructive, though limited, action. Since 1949, it has been sending advisory missions of experts or technical consultants to Member States for a period of six months to one year, at their request and with their financial assistance. In 1951, in agreement and co-operation with the Mexican Government and the Organization of American States, Unesco opened a Training and Production Centre at Patzcuaro (Mexico), which serves all the countries of Latin America.

This centre is an example of the assistance which the Organization is henceforth in a position to give to Member States in the field of fundamental education. It is direct assistance, unlike the spread of information through publications or the exchange of views and information through seminars. It is also continuing assistance, not a temporary measure like the despatch of missions of experts for short periods. It consists in the training of educators who will subsequently return to their own country and become leaders of the fundamental education movement there; in their turn, they will help to train an increasing number of qualified teachers. Educational methods suited to the region concerned are also

worked out, and appropriate teaching materials are prepared.

The Patzcuaro centre is helped in its work by international experts, but if that work is to be effective it must remain in keeping with sociological and cultural conditions in the region where the centre is located and for which it was designed. It can therefore only meet limited needs.<sup>1</sup> Yet similar problems remain to be solved all over the world.

Another centre of the same kind is soon to be opened in Egypt, at Sirs El Layan, an important place 100 kilometres north of Cairo; at this centre educators are to be trained for the Arab countries.

More of these centres should be set up as a matter of urgency. It would then be possible, through the above-mentioned process of training teachers to train others, and having regard to the particular circumstances of each country, to cover all areas where the need for a campaign against poverty and ignorance is most pressing. Another advantage of this network would be the opportunities it would afford for the exchange of services and the comparison of results obtained.

### *Adult Education*

Only in countries which have reached a very advanced stage of development can adult education be considered as distinct from campaigns against illiteracy. This type of education is voluntary, supplementary and of unlimited duration. The problems it raises, whether for the individual or for the community to which he belongs, also come within Unesco's purview. All information received by Unesco on new techniques and methods in adult education has to be assembled and communicated to the competent organizations and individuals. The Organization has to arrange for meetings of experts, designed to enable all study groups, from whatever association or country, to keep abreast of new developments. Lastly, Unesco must enlist the support of institutions for adult education, because they can do a great deal to promote international understanding and foster a world outlook.

With these aims in view, Unesco organized the first International Conference on Adult Education, at Elsinore (Denmark), in 1949. This conference led to the establishment of a small international committee responsible for advising the Organization on adult education. The following year a semi-

<sup>1</sup> For the organization and tempo of work of the Patzcuaro centre, see "A Typical Unesco Achievement", pp. 48-52.

nar on the methods and techniques of adult education was held at Salzburg (Austria); this seminar dealt with administrative problems connected with adult education, the intellectual training of adults, and the methods and techniques of art education. A few weeks later, another seminar took place at Malmö (Sweden) on the theme of libraries in adult education. An enquiry was conducted, to ascertain what part universities could play in these branches of adult education, and an international list of specialized organizations was compiled. Unesco had previously co-operated in the publication of a general survey of adult education in the Scandinavian countries.

In conjunction with the appropriate international organizations, Unesco is at present giving close attention to the question of workers' education. Plans are in progress for the establishment of an international centre near Paris, in 1952. The authorities responsible for workers' education in Unesco's Member States will be able to meet at this centre to study present needs as regards administration and organization, and to discuss educational problems of particular interest to them. The centre will also analyse the joint contribution made by the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations and labour organizations to the development of international understanding. It will be available to international workers' organizations wishing to organize seminars for their members.

### *Education of Women*

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948 states explicitly that women have a right to the same education as men. It is a matter of common knowledge that there is a great difference between this principle and actual practice. In some parts of the world out-dated traditions or obstinate prejudices make it difficult—even impossible—for girls to attend school or to have anything but the narrowest education. This remark applies not only to underdeveloped areas—where there is equality of the sexes in the sense that both are equally ignorant of the most elementary modern techniques—but also to advanced countries, where women are all too often relegated to the kitchen.

The problem of women's education cannot be shelved. They must be given, through adequate education, an opportunity to lead fuller, richer lives. The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations instructed Unesco to investigate the current situation and the educational opportunities

open to women. It asked Unesco to study methods for the improvement, through fundamental and adult education, of women's social status in underdeveloped areas, and of their vocational training. The Organization will submit the results of its enquiry to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. The Fifteenth International Conference on Public Education, convened jointly by Unesco and the International Bureau of Education at Geneva in 1952 dealt with the access of women to education. In preparation for that conference, Unesco asked experts from Chile, India and Yugoslavia to prepare reports on the relevant problems in their respective countries. IBE, through the governments concerned, conducted an enquiry on the situation in every country with regard to: instances of recognition in basic laws of the right of both sexes to education; the duration and limits of compulsory education for boys and girls; study programmes, curricula and textbooks in the different categories of girls' schools; posts reserved for men and women respectively in the management and inspection of schools. The enquiry also aimed at determining social, economic, educational and other factors that hinder or help the access of women to education. The resulting information was submitted to the conference as a basis for discussion. Its recommendations will be given wide publicity.

#### EDUCATION FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

All Unesco's work is directed towards the improvement of international understanding, in its own sphere of education, science and culture. For this it is not enough to organize more and more meetings and exchanges of persons and information. Nor is it enough to appeal to the spirit of solidarity among the nations to make the right to education a reality for all. It is also necessary that each individual shall learn the art of living in the world community at the same time that he will be learning to exercise his rights and fulfil his duties as a citizen. Education should therefore aim at developing both a national civic sense and a sense of international responsibility. Seen in this light, however, education is hampered by past cleavages which weigh upon modern man and to which must be added the difficulties of the present-day world. It is certainly no easy matter to overcome these obstacles and to direct education towards a better understanding between individuals and between peoples.

In seeking appropriate methods, it must be borne in mind that human beings, at whatever stage of mental development, find it difficult to master the problem of relations between social groups and particularly between countries. The teaching should above all be objective, and the teacher should show broadmindedness and tolerance. Unesco is endeavouring to improve educational curricula, methods and materials in this sense. The Organization seeks to introduce improvements in early childhood and school education, and to assist teachers and school or university administrators. It stimulates teaching about the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It has, in addition, a programme for youth.

### *Special Problems of Children*

A prerequisite of tolerance and understanding among the nations is the healthy mental and social development of every individual from earliest childhood. From 1946 to 1950, Unesco concentrated on assistance to child victims of the war. It cared for mutilated and homeless children, for displaced or refugee children in Europe. It sponsored the establishment or improvement of rehabilitation centres and children's communities.

Following the study of these special cases, Unesco tackled the problem of vagrant and delinquent children. For the past two years it has been dealing with more general questions and trying to work out methods for giving children an all-round education that will fit them for life in the modern world. Meetings of experts have been organized to discuss the part played by nursery schools in the emotional and intellectual development of small boys and girls, and the problem of recruiting suitable teachers, and to study the most appropriate educational psychology methods for the training of physically handicapped children. A regional conference is to be held at the end of 1952 to study educational problems in relation to the mental health of children in Europe.

The Organization also undertook an investigation of the emotional development of primary school children, with a view to applying educational psychology to the furtherance of international understanding. A seminar organized at Pôdebrady (Czechoslovakia) discussed the education for international understanding of children from 3 to 13 years. Participants considered the part played by children in various civilizations, their psychological development, and the abnor-

mal psychological influences to which they may be subjected. Experimental methods of teaching children to have a friendly outlook towards people of other nationalities have since been tried out.

### *Curricula, Methods and Teaching Materials*

In a world where the connexion between education and the preservation of peace is abundantly clear, it would be paradoxical to try to improve international understanding through education whilst leaving out of account the schools themselves. At the close of the first world war, the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation encouraged the conclusion of agreements for the revision of school textbooks. In certain regions, too (e.g. the Scandinavian countries, the American States), private or official efforts to reach agreement sometimes produced satisfactory results. The problem of curricula had already emerged.

From the beginning, Unesco's action was not confined to continuing the work of its predecessors; it tried to break fresh ground. The new needs that had arisen in the world could only be met by bold measures. It was not enough to revise school textbooks or introduce a few new subjects into the curricula. What was much more important was to impress upon educationists the need to imbue all forms of education with a new spirit. "International understanding" could not be simply tacked on to conventional curricula. It had to be conceived as an integral part of an education adapted to an entirely new situation. Unesco therefore undertook to review the various problems of educational curricula, methods and materials, with a view not so much to recommending or imposing as to suggesting solutions. It cannot be too strongly stressed that the final decision is always left to the school authorities and teachers in the Member States themselves.

It was thought advisable at the beginning to discover what was implied by international understanding, to determine the problems to be solved, define spheres of action and decide what forms that action should take. This was the purpose of the first general seminar organized by Unesco (Sèvres, France, 1947). It was followed in 1948 by two similar seminars. The first, at Pôdebrady (Czechoslovakia), considered the psychological bases of the development of world-mindedness in children; the second, at Ashridge (United

Kingdom), dealt with the important problem of the professional, moral and social training of teachers. A further seminar met in Brussels, in 1950, to define methods and criteria to be adopted in making a critical study of textbooks, particularly history books. In the summer of 1952, a seminar studied methods to be used in education for living in a world community and ways of ensuring that the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are given a place in education. In addition to these general seminars, Unesco organized a series of specialized seminars to consider how the teaching of the main school subjects can contribute to international understanding. The first of these seminars, held in Montreal in 1950, dealt with the teaching of geography as a means of furthering international understanding. The 1951 seminar at Sèvres studied the content and methods of history teaching. A seminar on the teaching of modern languages is planned for 1953, and preparatory work is already in progress.

These seminars provide an opportunity for the teachers who attend as delegates from Member States to discuss common problems and compare notes. In preparation for the seminar, Unesco sends them working documents and publication. After the seminar, Unesco remains in touch with the participants, continues to supply them with information and receives reports from them on follow-up activities. A number of them write articles, give lectures and radio broadcasts and, in general, try to give wide publicity to the ideas expressed during the seminar.

But seminars are not an end themselves. They are only one of the means—though one that undoubtedly has a very special human value—used by Unesco. Another of the Organization's duties is to supply information, and this, in turn, often implies the carrying out of studies. For instance, one publication deals historically with the problem of the revision of school textbooks and also proposes certain criteria for their improvement, while another embodies the results of a comparative study on curricula for the teaching of history and geography and for social education. A travelling library of history and geography textbooks was circulated in various countries in the hope that a comparison of their own textbooks with the exhibits might lead educational authorities to make improvements. Unesco has also encouraged the establishment of a large number of bilateral committees, in various countries, for the exchange and mutual criticism of history textbooks. The efforts of these committees have led not only to the revision of existing textbooks but also to the

correction of manuscripts, following criticisms submitted to authors by foreign colleagues.

Unesco has thus neglected no opportunity of introducing a new conception of education into the preparation of curricula, methods and teaching materials.

### *Teaching About Human Rights and the United Nations*

Unesco is studying ways of acquainting pupils at the various levels of education with the theory and application of human rights and with the activities of the United Nations Organization which defends these rights. Experts have been consulted on several occasions and reports have been submitted to the Economic and Social Council containing recommendations regarding the principles and methods to be adopted. Preliminary discussions on this problem were held at the first seminar at Sèvres in 1947. A year later, a meeting of educationists held at Adelphi College (New York) went into the matter more thoroughly, paying special attention to the question of suitable teaching methods. In particular, they discussed the ideas generally held by adults of a world community and the United Nations; they sought to define the basic programme for a training which would produce well-informed teachers with a good grasp of these problems. At another seminar held in the Netherlands in 1952 the main topic of discussion was active methods to be applied in education for living in a world community, with special reference to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Ways of making the declaration intelligible to children have been studied and it has been proposed that drawing competitions be organized for schoolchildren throughout the world.

This kind of education should not, however, be confined to children and young people. It is also needed by adults whether in advanced countries or in underdeveloped areas. It should be introduced into adult education centres for workers and into fundamental education programmes. So may a world conscience and a world outlook be brought into being.

By concluding an agreement with the World Federation of United Nations Associations, Unesco has been able to give assistance to national seminars organized in many countries. It has published pamphlets designed for International Relations Clubs and similar groups; it has prepared travelling exhibitions and encouraged the designing of posters for wide

distribution. The Organization has often drawn attention to the valuable help that may be given by the press, radio and films in spreading knowledge about the United Nations, and to the most suitable ways of using these special media; it has supplied the necessary information to the agencies concerned.

Following the aggression in Korea, Unesco embarked on a new task in this connexion. In order to encourage teaching about the principles of collective security, it issued three pamphlets on the subject for teachers and pupils in the senior classes of secondary schools. There are also three booklets, companion publications to the pamphlets, containing practical suggestions for teachers on this particular branch of teaching. Experts on international law were asked to prepare more comprehensive works for use in universities and similar institutions.

### *Work with Youth*

In line with its policy with regard to children, Unesco's work for young people is no longer confined to exceptional cases but now covers general and continuing problems. During the period of post-war reconstruction, this work took the form of co-operation with the International Voluntary Work Camps; it has now developed into an endeavour to associate all international youth organizations with Unesco's activities.

Unesco organizes periodical conferences for the leaders of these organizations, which provide them with opportunities for exchanging views and preparing plans for future co-operation. It helps appropriate national groups and associations to organize seminars for the study of practical ways of inculcating world-mindedness and a sense of civic responsibility in young people. It prepares international seminars for leaders of youth movements who want to learn how international life is organized and to take part in Unesco's activities: topics of such seminars include the diffusion of the Declaration of Human Rights, fundamental education, and the application of the Technical Assistance Programme in under-developed countries. One of these seminars is to be held in 1952 for leaders of youth movements in South-East Asia and the South Pacific.

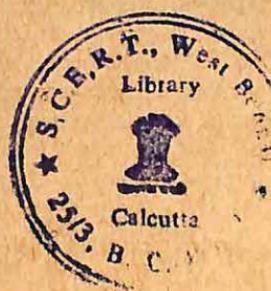
The Organization also encourages the educational activities of youth movements by allocating study grants and teaching materials. It continues to collaborate with the International Voluntary Work Camps, which provide tangible evidence of

the spirit of "international service". It has made an experiment by setting up in Germany an International Youth Institute which will serve as a centre for the promotion of international exchanges and the training of youth group leaders.

One very effective way of developing a spirit of international understanding is to encourage schoolboys and schoolgirls in different countries to exchange correspondence. Besides their obvious cultural value (especially when supervised by teachers), these exchanges create bonds of sympathy and friendship capable of surviving many tests, as was often seen during the late war. Unesco gives support to the International Federation of Organizations for School Correspondence and Exchanges, which has been operating with increasing success for over 30 years and has arranged contacts between children and young people in some 30 countries.

The various endeavours to promote education for international understanding are integral parts of a single programme. They pave the way, in the home, in nursery schools, in subsequent education at all levels, and in connexion with youth activities, for tolerance and a balanced outlook resulting from a proper adjustment to the conditions of modern life.

In the limited space at our disposal, it is not possible to give full details of Unesco's educational activities. One typical achievement should, however, be described. The Patzcuaro project is interesting for two reasons: firstly, it is to be repeated, with a few minor adaptations, in other parts of the world; secondly, it gives a general idea of the tasks to be tackled and the methods employed by Unesco in the campaign against ignorance which it has been constantly waging since its creation. In the last chapter of this pamphlet we shall therefore give an account of the project.



## A TYPICAL UNESCO ACHIEVEMENT THE FUNDAMENTAL EDUCATION CENTRE AT PATZCUARO

The Patzcuaro region is about 250 miles from Mexico City. It has long been famous for its scenery, and guidebooks call it the "Switzerland of Mexico". The city lies at the southern end of an anchor-shaped lake, 80 square miles in area and 6,700 feet above sea level, ringed by a wall of volcanic peaks. Six main islands rise from the lake like the crests of submerged mountains, with picturesque villages clinging to their sides.

The peaceful provincial town of Patzcuaro serves as the trading centre for the Tarascan Indian villages in its immediate neighbourhood. The Tarascans are one of the most advanced of the Indian peoples of Latin America. The villagers are mostly fishermen, farmers and woodcutters. They have a long tradition of local handicrafts and are extremely musical. But for all the natural beauty of their country and their passion for festivals, they are constantly haunted by economic and social anxieties. The level of the lake has been falling steadily, and fish are becoming scarce. There is very little water, harvests dry up through lack of irrigation and cattle can hardly find sustenance. In the absence of a proper forestry policy, the mountain slopes are being stripped bare by forest fires.

Such is the background of the first regional fundamental education centre which was opened in 1951. Its advantages as a practical school for the training of technicians in this new branch are obvious. Twenty Tarascan villages, with a total population of 10,000, have been selected as "laboratory" villages where theories and programmes are being put to the test of daily life. Finding an answer to the problems of these communities involves basic changes in men's lives which require months, if not years, of hard work by teachers and technicians.

The Patzcuaro centre is the result of a co-operative effort by Unesco, the Organization of American States, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Labour Organisation, the World Health Organization and the Government of Mexico. It is already training 52 students.

The centre has two objectives: to train these students and their successors as teachers of fundamental education in their own Latin American countries; and to find out what are the best available aids to their teaching.

The present course of study at Patzcuaro lasts 21 months and is divided into five distinct phases. The first is an introductory period, when students meet for the first time and report on what they have been doing in their own countries in the way of education. This is a very important phase because "fundamental educators" nearly always work in regions cut off from the outside world. If, 1,000 miles away, an educator has hit upon a short cut in literacy teaching, they have little opportunity to learn about it. During this first period, which is short, the students contribute their own knowledge in the five fields in which the centre is working: health, rural economy, domestic economy, recreation and use of leisure time, and social education (that is, education in community responsibilities).

Equipped with the raw material of their own experience, the students then go on to the second phase of their training, consisting of a seminar. It is during this period that the general principles, the methods and the objectives of fundamental education are expounded to them by instructors. This phase ends what might be considered the classroom stage of the course.

In the third phase, the students are divided into teams assigned to the 20 "laboratory" villages. These teams are selected with two factors in mind: firstly, each member is specialized in one of the five fields mentioned above; secondly, stage, but the centre's course does not end here. In the fifth specialists working in teams is basic. Each nation which sends students to the centre selected them as a team. Upon arrival, the national groups are broken up into international teams; but they will return to their own countries in their original unit and, in many cases, continue to work together as a unit.

The students go into their assigned villages and make intensive, house-to-house, family-by-family surveys of all phases of village life, from the kitchen to the schoolroom. This survey phase ends with detailed studies of Mexican educational and social institutions now working in the Patzcuaro region. The students then co-ordinate their findings and begin to put them to use.

During the fourth phase, teams work out individual fundamental education programmes for their assigned villages, with



the assistance of the teaching staff. This is the planning stage, but the centre's course does not end here. In the fifth and final phase, student teams learn through actual practice what their ideas and plans are worth. This phase begins with teams living in villages for at least a fortnight. Then students continue to work in the villages during the day and return to the centre at night to review results.

This five-phase programme is also a course in leadership. Each student in a team will have a chance to direct its activities. Following the field work, students will be given an opportunity to see how well their programmes have taken hold in each village before returning to their own countries.

Throughout the curriculum of the Patzcuaro centre, emphasis is laid on the need for a local approach to local problems. The Unesco centre must not only develop methods for educators all over the world, but must also demonstrate that these methods can be applied in practice. This is the approach that has been adopted in solving the second main problem which has been laid before the centre, the production of teaching aids for use in the Patzcuaro region.

These teaching aids often have little in common with the books and blackboards of ordinary schools. In too many instances adults, who have learnt to read and write during literacy campaigns, slip back into illiteracy because they have nothing to read. You cannot expect a man with a wife and family to support to be interested in children's fairy tales.

The Patzcuaro centre produces various aids suited to local needs, including books, films, filmstrips (the modern descendant of the old-fashioned magic lantern slide) and radio programmes, as the need arises in the work of the students. Since Spanish is spoken in nearly all Latin American countries, and, in many of them, educators have to face the problem of a bilingual Indian population, it is felt that the methods and materials which have proved successful among the Tarascan Indians of Patzcuaro will be valuable to educators throughout much of the Western Hemisphere.

The first step in the production of teaching aids might be called a survey of the vocabulary of the region. Although the Tarascans speak Spanish, their language is filled with local variations. For its survey, the centre enlisted the aid of local newspapers and school-teachers. The teachers asked their pupils to write little stories about their daily lives, their home, their parents' work, their meals, their markets and their recreations. In analysing these stories, the centre's students have become extremely useful as "word detectives".

Coming from other countries, they quickly notice local turns in the speech of Patzcuaro's inhabitants.

Two artists and two pressmen, recruited locally, help with the textbook production work. It is better to have a local artist, because he knows his environment, and in these textbooks reality is needed rather than abstract conceptions. If the artist draws a house or a fishing-boat, it has to be the kind of house or boat that a pupil can recognize immediately; foreign artists would have to spend too much time getting to know the environment.

The centre also proposes to publish wall newspapers, to be posted up in committies where students are working. These one-page weekly papers will give information on health, domestic economy and recreational activities, as well as home and foreign news. As they are intended for readers who cannot yet follow ordinary newspapers, they will be illustrated and published in very large type. The centre has equipment which enables it to do experimental publishing work at relatively low cost. It is trying to determine how far the costs of producing the necessary reading material for fundamental education can be cut.

Educational films entail just as much research. Films made for illiterate populations and underdeveloped regions—like Patzcuaro—require techniques entirely different from those accepted by more sophisticated audiences. A case in point (there are, in fact, hundreds): in a film on water purification, shown to a rural audience, contaminated water drained from a refuse pile was coloured red, which reassured the spectators because they had never seen any red water.

Filmstrips are more advantageous than films because they are easier to use. If there is no electricity, a filmstrip can be shown with a petrol lamp projector. Scenes from filmstrips can be kept on the screen as long as is necessary for a full explanation, and it is simple to flash back and explain a difficult point all over again if questions are asked.

Keeping records is an important part of the centre's work. The materials it produces, and the results it obtains from them, are of interest to educators throughout the world. If they stand the test of local conditions, they will be made available as models in the rest of Latin America.

The library at Patzcuaro is serving as a research centre for students and teachers. In addition, it will become a main library for branches in the Tarascan villages. Carefully-packed cases of books will be sent out from Patzcuaro in boats or motor cars, depending upon their destination, and will

help provide new literates with reading material. The centre is running courses of library organization for its own students, and has placed the facilities of Patzcuaro at the disposal of librarians now working in the region.

Lastly, the centre is trying to reach people through their ears as well as their eyes. It has already begun broadcasting a "school of the air" programme from the radio station at Morelia, and old colonial town 35 miles from Patzcuaro. The students help to prepare these broadcasts. A preliminary survey of the region showed that each Tarascan village has at least six or seven radio sets, often battery-powered. Enquiries are being made into the possibility of installing centrally-located loudspeakers as village listening points.

Such, in brief outline, are the activities of the first regional fundamental education centre. Once it is fully organized, it will be equipped to handle simultaneously two classes of 100 students each. If similar international or national centres were set up in the various underdeveloped areas of the world, some thousands of specialists in fundamental education could be rapidly trained. In addition to the Patzcuaro centre for Latin America, a centre is shortly to be set up at Sirs El Layan, in Egypt, for the Arab countries. The graduates, in their turn, will be able to staff similar training centres, organized on more local lines. It is these latter centres which will train the teachers who are to work in the field.

## CONCLUSION

Ignorance is part of a vicious circle of under-production, malnutrition and endemic disease. A peaceful world cannot exist if more than half its people are excluded from the benefits of "an ordered peace" and the material progress of the twentieth century—for they cannot be excluded permanently. At the opening of the Patzcuaro centre, Mr. Torres Bodet said: "We think with horror of concentration camps, yet we do not seem to realize that over twelve hundred million men and women are hemmed in by the invisible barriers of their own ignorance, more relentless than prison walls or barbed wire."

In the face of this situation, educators have a duty going beyond their efforts to impart knowledge, teach skills or inculcate habits and attitudes of mind; they should also seek to develop latent qualities and abilities, so that these may, as far as possible, be converted into positive assets. Education can and should be a continuing process, for the human minds capable of developing all through life; ceaseless efforts must be made to find ways of helping that development, that is to say, methods suitable for adults of all ages and not only for children or young people.

Education has a value for society as well as for individuals. It helps society as a whole to develop an awareness of its traditions and destiny, and to adapt itself to new conditions, whilst imbuing it with a new spirit to face the new tasks imposed by the pursuit of its aims. The conscious participation of every individual in the development of the community, whether local or national, is unthinkable without continuing education.

The world today is moving towards unity. We must help this movement by concentrating on education for international understanding. The defences of peace must be constructed in the mind of every man, through his growing conviction of the basic solidarity of mankind.

It is on these considerations that Unesco's work for the training and development of the human personality is based. At the celebration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the

great French *Encyclopaedia*, Mr. Torres Bodet recalled the wish expressed by Diderot: "It will be a happy day when the world's rulers realize that their security depends upon having educated men at their command. All our time and effort would have been well spent, were we able to claim that we had done something to abate that spirit of confusion which so jeopardizes the peace of societies, that we had brought friendship and tolerance among our fellowmen and had at last made them admit the superiority of a universal ethic over particular ethics, which engender hatred and dissension and weaken the ties uniting mankind."

That wish will remain unfulfilled until the right to education has become a reality.



The

## INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SCIENCE BULLETIN

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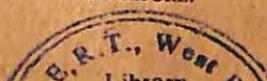
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